

forward



From biophilic design to the burgeoning NFT trend, we've rounded up nine innovative examples that show how creative problem-solving continues to propel us forward

Words / Lindi Brownell Meiring

movement

A New Way of Moving

After a decade of behind-the-scenes innovation, award-winning Dutch brand VanMoof – the 'bike-meets-smart-tech company' – launched its latest range of e-bikes in 2020. Some of the key features of the revamped VanMoof S3 and X3 include an automatic four-speed e-shifter, a powerful turbo boost motor, an anti-theft kick lock and integrated hydraulic brakes (a first-of-its-kind system specifically designed for use in cities). Perhaps most notable, however, is the price tag: 60% less than their first model. [vanmoof.com](https://www.vanmoof.com)

A New Way of Seeing

Multidisciplinary designer Ackeem Ngwenya, together with his partner Shariff Vreugd, are behind the Berlin-based start-up Reframd, an eyewear brand focused on inclusivity. The brand makes use of 3D printing technology to create sustainable, made-to-order glasses from which 80% of waste can be recovered. Reframd captures your face to compile a unique 3D model, and adjusts the frames for the perfect fit. They also offer a virtual try-on service via Instagram. Read our interview with Ackeem on p210. [reframd.com](https://www.reframd.com)

Bicycle photograph courtesy of vanmoof.com





A New Way of Working

The desire to invite nature and the outdoors in is even more pronounced when we're confined to our homes. Award-winning Heatherwick Studio, headed up by British designer Thomas Heatherwick, has created one of nine tables for Connected: Made Together, a project for the Design Museum at the 2020 London Design Festival (which is run in collaboration with the American Hardwood Export Council). The system is the ideal example of biophilic design. Six maple wood planters can be clamped to any flat surface and function as table legs or 'stems' for an instant and innovative boost of greenery. heatherwick.com

Table photograph courtesy of Heatherwick Studio



A New Way of Making

As Instagram brings craft into popular culture, there's a new-found appreciation for the handmade and the originality of one-offs. Swedish artist Alfild Külper decided to start crafting textural biomorphic rugs from wool in response to her fight against monoculture and a desire to focus on something lighter than her nine-to-five. Inspired by loved ones and nature, the tactile pieces – which she affectionately calls 'Fuzzy Friends' – were each created by hand with a specific person in mind, allowing Alfild to generate a sense of connection and warmth in a time of Covid-19 isolation. [@alfiesfuzzyfriends](https://www.instagram.com/alfiesfuzzyfriends)

A New Way of Walking

After launching his conceptual Moss Airs project, industrial designer Matthew Edwards, who heads up Johannesburg-based experimental design studio, matte, has since teamed up with adidas to create one-off versions of iconic sneaker silhouettes from the Clean Classics range (pictured). As part of the collaboration, Matthew covers sneakers in moss, drawing attention to the future of textiles, wearable materials and the sustainability of footwear. The moss needs to be watered in order for the shoes to keep their colour and texture, highlighting the potential of living materials and how they could possibly be used in the future of footwear design. This ongoing project recently saw Matthew team up with Room Studio on the iconic Stan Smiths. Read our interview with Matthew on p211. matte.co.za





A New Way of Repurposing

Spanish product designer Júlia Roca Vera, a student at ELISAVA School of Design and Engineering in Barcelona, is behind Lleig (meaning 'ugly' in Catalan), a cosmetics range made from food waste. Using a single orange, discarded because it wasn't considered to be aesthetically pleasing, Júlia created four products including a moisturiser, soap and essential oils made from the fruit's flesh. The collection's reusable ceramic containers form part of the skincare ritual – the face wash is made in the jar by adding water to dried orange peel potpourri, and the remaining 'juice' can be consumed to nourish the body after cleansing and moisturising. juliaroca.net



A New Way of Creating

Moat Designs is the latest project from designer-maker Robyn Britz, co-founder of popular Cape Town-based textile brand Zana Products. While exploring different creative mediums, Robyn began making candles in 3D-printed moulds, which inspired a collection of colourful limited-edition Bangle vases. Printed using a vegetable-based plastic, the 10 designs are made to order and feature a range of interchangeable stackable accessories. Turn to p46 to see Moat's selection of candles. moatdesigns.com



A New Way of Sharing

Johannesburg-based designer Katlego Tshuma won the third iteration of the annual Nando's Hot Young Designer competition in 2020 for his Sangu bench, a design inspired by the organic shapes of traditional African grass mats (*sangu* in Xitsonga). The bench met the brief for being authentically South African and needing to respond to our post-Covid environment. Katlego has since collaborated with local product design studio Dokter and Misses to manufacture a prototype of the winning design. Read our interview with Katlego and Adriaan Hugo of Dokter and Misses on p217. [@1onekay](https://www.1onekay.com)

Bench photograph: Maitlboro Tyllo

A New Way of Collecting

Argentinian artist and designer Andrés Reisinger recently sold 10 virtual furniture pieces, from a collection entitled 'The Shipping' for USD450 000 in the space of 10 minutes. The digital auction made use of non-fungible token (NFT) blockchain technology, where collectors receive a unique NFT (like a digital certificate of ownership), often in place of a tangible item. The trend is certainly not limited to furniture: Christie's auction house sold a digital artwork by artist and graphic designer Beeple for almost USD70 million, while Gucci is selling virtual sneakers for USD1799. Read more about this virtual design trend on p222. reisinger.studio

